

**SITUATION REPORT NO. 2**  
**INCIDENT No. 2006-032**  
**Date: September 1, 2006 Time: 4:00 p.m.**

**TO:** Governor John Hoeven  
State Capitol  
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. **NATURE OF DISASTER:** **Drought** – Abnormally dry to moderate drought conditions exist across North Dakota resulting in numerous fire emergencies, water supply shortages and adverse economic effects.
2. **DEATHS AND INJURIES:** No deaths or injuries have been reported.
3. **DAMAGES:** Meteorologists for the Grand Forks and Bismarck Offices of the National Weather Service (NWS) reported drought conditions continue to exist for west and central North Dakota but have lessened in the east. Rainfall this year has been below average. For June, July and August, rainfall at the Grand Forks airport measured 4.88 inches, which is a 3.10 inches departure of normal, while rainfall in Fargo amounted to 5.78 inches, which is 2.17 inches below average. From January to August, Bismarck's average rainfall amount is down 5.48 inches; 61 percent of the total deficit occurred in June, July and August alone with rainfall amounts averaging 61 percent of the total deficit. From January through August, percent of normal rainfall in western North Dakota ranged from 57 percent in Bismarck, 65 percent in Dickinson, 73 percent in Jamestown, 67 percent in Minot, 85 percent in Williston and 66 percent in Hettinger. In eastern North Dakota, meteorologists reported areas south of the I-94 corridor received closer to normal precipitation while the area from U.S. Highway 2 to I-94 received less than normal precipitation and slightly above normal temperatures. That area north of Highway 2 varied from extreme to moderate drought conditions.

The August 29 U.S. Drought Monitor indicated current conditions place North Dakota in a moderate to severe drought category with parts of the south central and southwest to be in extreme drought conditions. Moderate to heavy rainfall was received across eastern North Dakota, resulting in improved conditions at the time of the report.

The U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook shows drought conditions will persist with some chance of improvement through November.

On August 23, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) increased flows from the Garrison Dam to supplement the drought-plagued low water levels at the Oahe Reservoir along the Missouri River. The USACE further reports Lake Oahe's latest elevation is at a record low at 1,571.3 feet above sea level. Drought conditions are also cutting into hydropower production.

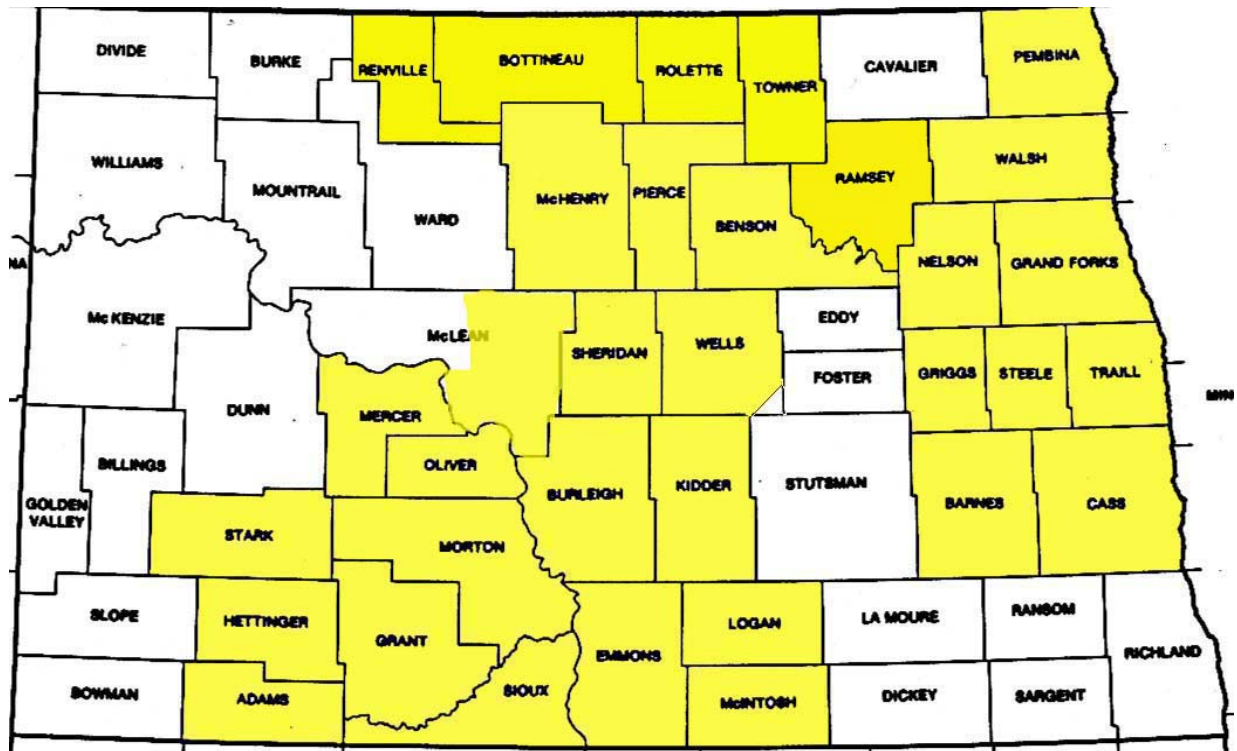
The N.D. State Forest Service indicated sustained drought conditions have caused this summer's fire season to be the worst in state history. As of August 18, 28 of the state's 53 counties are still under burn bans. A record 651 grass fires have been reported so far this summer and no part of the state has been spared. Fires have blackened nearly 45,000 acres of grasslands across the state, more than double the amount of acres burned last year.

In late July, tribal officials with the assistance of state, federal and other local jurisdictions were able to control a grass fire, the Lund Fire, that burned for three days. Sioux County suffered an overland fire that consumed more than 9,226 acres of rough terrain, pasture and open grassland between Fort Yates and Selfridge. The fire was believed to have been ignited by lightning strikes.

The Red River Basin Commission reports drought in the Red River Valley is harming the clay material underneath Fargo. The instability can crack sidewalks, driveways and streets and may also increase riverbank erosion along the Red River. The potential damage may occur when the clay material underneath shrinks because of a lack of water. The Cass County Commission has approved a revised subdivision ordinance for rural development requiring homes be built further from rivers.

Throughout North Dakota, emergency managers reported crop losses. Corn crop for grain is poor and some of the acreage cannot be baled or grazed due to high nitrate levels. Grazing has been drastically reduced. Producers have sold livestock, grazed crop land and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage, and moved livestock to other areas where grazing is available. Producers will be deciding if additional livestock sales will be needed once an inventory of acquired feedstocks is made. Ranchers and farmers are hauling water due to shortages. Water holes are stagnant. Some cows have died due to poisoning and lung diseases. Producers are worried they will not be able to make payments.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) officials reported 33 counties are eligible for emergency haying and grazing due to drought conditions.



4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from previous reports.

STATE: No change from previous reports.

FEDERAL: No change from previous reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: No volunteer action has been reported.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: On September 1, Governor Hoeven asked U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns to issue a Secretarial Disaster Declaration for all North Dakota counties. The request comes in response to drought conditions in North Dakota and following the completion of damage assessments by the FSA. The extreme dry conditions have seriously affected the state's agricultural industry and its related service providers statewide.

The Governor's request follows the North Dakota U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) State Emergency Board recommendation by unanimous vote on September 1 to certify the damage assessment reports (DARs). The DARs indicated 50 counties sustained crop losses of 30 percent or more, while three counties – Billings, Golden Valley and Traill -- reported one or more producers were denied commercial credit.

On August 29, Governor John Hoeven met with the USDA Secretary in South Dakota to push for federal drought disaster legislation for farmers and ranchers. The Secretary announced that the USDA will provide drought assistance funding for the nation's counties most severely affected by dry weather. North Dakota producers will be provided assistance from three of the USDA's discretionary sources:

- Block grants from USDA Section 32 funds, which are a permanent appropriation used for domestic food programs and disaster relief for farmers (the amount of which has yet to be determined).
- \$1.38 million in the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), which offers landowners an opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. This will be used for drought mitigation on grazing lands.
- \$411,000 in Emergency Conservation Program funding, which provides emergency cost-share funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters and for carrying out emergency water conservation measures in periods of severe drought. The program will provide water for livestock in drought situations.

On August 24, N.D. Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson reminded farmers and ranchers they have until September 1, to cut hay on CRP acres. Commissioner Johnson requested the FSA extend the deadline until September 15. This request was denied due to lack of requests to cut the available CRP land. Producers have until October 1 to bale and remove hay that has been cut from CRP land.

Earlier this summer, the USDA approved the Governor's request to open CRP acres to grazing.

Governor Hoeven urged USACE officials to take steps to hold lake levels stable on Lakes Sakakawea and Oahe. On August 24, the Governor arranged for USACE officials to come to North Dakota to take a tour and see firsthand the effects of low lake levels. Governor Hoeven and USACE officials also met with a citizens group surrounding Lake Sakakawea. Hoeven and the group called for several specific actions as follows: suspend targeted releases when barges are not moving on the lower Missouri River; and plan for continued extreme drought conditions including prevention of municipal water supply interruptions; and protect cold water habitat by continuing daily flow cycling and discharging the majority of the water through the modified penstocks. The Governor urged efforts commence on a permanent fix to the intake structure to preserve cold water habitat. He further requested that the Omaha USACE staff work cooperatively with Upper Basin states to secure funding to allow USACE assistance for state and local access ramps on the large lakes.

Governor Hoeven has also organized a letter from Missouri River Basin governors to Congress and USACE leaders urging stronger drought conservation measures throughout the basin and to revisit the 62-year-old Flood Control Act of 1944 to reflect the changed economic and environmental priorities of the Missouri River Basin.

The Bank of North Dakota (BND) is providing low-interest rate disaster relief programs for North Dakota farmers, ranchers and business owners impacted by recent extreme weather conditions.

This summer, the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) made former no-mow areas on portions of the state highway system available for mowing. In addition, due to drought conditions resulting in hay shortages in southwestern North Dakota, NDDOT has authorized a road restriction waiver on length and weight of trucks for hay movements only on currently posted routes with gross vehicle weight (GVW) restrictions. The waiver is effective July 7 to November 1, 2006.

The Governor, along with the state's congressional delegation and agriculture commissioner, recently met with farmers and ranchers southeast of Bismarck to discuss additional measures that can be taken immediately to relieve the impact of dry conditions.

Governor Hoeven announced that the North Dakota State University Extension Service provides an online posting where ranchers who need to buy or want to sell hay can list their information. It can be accessed at:  
[www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/feedlist/](http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/feedlist/).

Members of the North Dakota Agriculture Drought Task Force have been meeting periodically to review conditions and develop recommendations. The task force will advise the state's congressional delegation that a new agriculture disaster bill is urgently needed and that it should include:

- Additional funds for the Emergency Conservation Program;
- A cost-share provision for the transportation of livestock feed and a direct loss compensation payment;
- Additional funds for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP), and
- Specific procedures for the opening of CP 23, CRP acreage that buffers wetland areas, for haying during a drought emergency.

The State Emergency Operations Center has received drought emergency and disaster declarations from the following counties: Barnes, Dickey, Emmons, Grant, Hettinger, Kidder, LaMoure, Logan, McHenry, Pierce, Ransom and Stutsman.

7. ASSITANCE NEEDED: No assistance is requested.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No additional outside help has been reported.
9. OTHER INFORMATION: The N.D. Division of Homeland Security's Situation Reports are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.nd.gov/des>.

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Greg Wilz, State Director